

THE GENERAL PLAN
COUNTY OF SAN BENITO, CALIFORNIA

SAFETY ELEMENT

1973


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Foreword. This Safety Element of the San Benito County General Plan is included in the same volume with the Seismic Safety Element. The two are closely inter-related, and if published separately would require considerable duplication of text.

The Safety Element covers the subject of fire protection which is not covered by any other element in the General Plan. It also includes those procedures that must be carried out after any disaster strikes to protect the health and safety of its victims.

These latter measures are substantially the same as would be taken after a major earthquake, and in fact, earthquake and fire usually occur together.

The requirement in the Planning law that the Safety Element also include mapping of geologic hazards would appear to be a substantial overlap on the Seismic Safety Element. Such mapping is contained in this volume under that element and therefore is not duplicated in this one.

Protection From Fire. In the early days of World War II the nation became acutely conscious of the terrible loss of life and property that might occur if some enemy force were to carry out large-scale bombing raids. Motion pictures and broadcast descriptions about the disastrous conflagrations which were caused by the bombing of London and other British cities, prompted the organization of thousands of U. S. citizens into volunteer groups.

These units were organized to fight fires and explosions and take care of disaster victims by having emergency food and water supplies available. They were also prepared to give medical care, and had evacuation

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routes mapped so that the populace could be moved to safety away from military targets. The name Civil Defense was applied to this activity and, although it seems inappropriate now, it is still used generally to describe those activities which are covered by the Safety Element.

In San Benito County this function is under the direction of the County Sheriff. The Sheriff has delegated the duties of disaster planning to one of his deputies. In large measure, the material covered by this element is based on the work which has been done by the Sheriff and his staff.

Disaster Planning. All counties in California are a part of a state-wide network covered by the California Civil Defense Disaster Plan. Under this plan the state is divided into six regions. San Benito County is a part of Region 2, a group of fourteen counties which are primarily along the coastline. The other counties in Region 2 are Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma.

The state is a part of a nationwide network which is controlled from a disaster center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Disaster planning for the state is under the jurisdiction of the Office of Emergency Services which is located in Sacramento. Each county must have the approval of this office for its plan. San Benito County's plan was approved on November 23, 1971 and on December 20, 1971 the Board of Supervisors adopted the plan by resolution. Each county plan must be reviewed and brought up-to-date at two year intervals.

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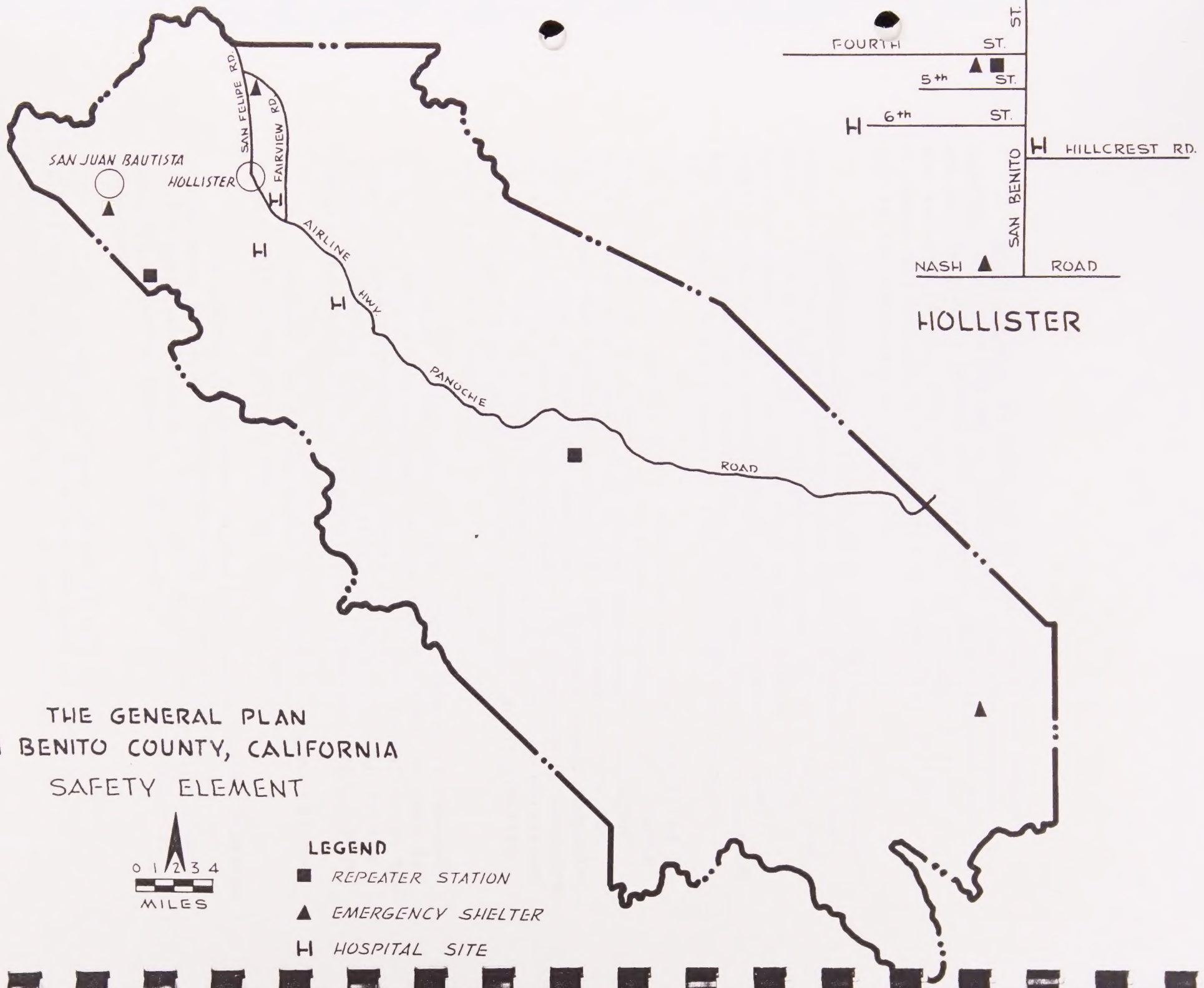
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THE GENERAL PLAN SAN BENITO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA SAFETY ELEMENT



- LEGEND**
- REPEATER STATION
 - ▲ EMERGENCY SHELTER
 - H HOSPITAL SITE





HONG KONG



WATER

MOUNTAIN

SHEK O

Mutual Aid. In addition to the plan, the county, together with the Cities of Hollister, San Juan Bautista and Gilroy have a mutual aid agreement which assures that the efforts of all four entities can be pooled if a disaster strikes which is beyond the capability of any one of the agencies to cope with.

Communications. The need to be able to communicate under any contingency which might arise is covered by the plan. If the regular telephone lines are in operation they would be used. In the event this is not possible, then a radio communication system which has just recently been installed would be brought into use. This system is located in a communication center in the county jail building.

Two-way remote radio equipment has been installed in the offices of the County Agricultural Commissioner, County Road Commissioner, Hollister Police Department, Hollister Fire Department, Stephens & Poletti Ambulance Service and the Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital. Two-way radio communications through the use of installed transceivers in vehicles of the San Juan Bautista Police Department and the Hollister Public Works Department, provide communications capability with these two agencies. .

Because of the size of the county, repeater stations which can boost the strength of the radio signal so that it can be heard throughout the county have been installed on the County Jail building in Hollister, on Call Mountain in the Emmett District, and on Fremont Peak. (See map facing page)

In addition to the fixed stations, the same offices have mobile stations in various types of vehicles.

A number of members in the San Benito County Disaster Corps have installed Citizens-Band radio transceivers in their homes and vehicles thus providing "backup" and supplementary communications in the event of local emergency or disaster.

The communications center is equipped with an auxilliary power plant which can be used to operate the system in case the utility power supply should fail.



COMMUNICATION CENTER



RESCUE EQUIPMENT VAN

Emergency Welfare. Provision for food, clothing and housing is the responsibility of an emergency welfare section. This is made up of people from the American Red Cross and the County Welfare Department. Additional personnel of the San Benito County Disaster Corps, if needed, would supplement personnel of the two foregoing organizations.

Rescue Service. Early this year, the Hollister Fire Department will provide rescue training to 13 members of the San Benito County Disaster Corps as well as the assigned regular and volunteer members of the Fire Department. The Department has remodeled a van type vehicle to include every type of equipment which might be used by a rescue service. The various law enforcement agencies in the County call upon the vehicle, about 10 to 12 times each year, to extricate victims trapped in vehicles at the scene of serious automobile accidents.

Radiological Defense Training and Medical Self-Help Training is the responsibility of the Adult Education Department of the San Benito County High School. Training involving communications, earthquake preparation and general orientation of the public is provided by the Civil Defense Division of the Sheriff's Department. Rescue training (heavy and light) is provided by the Hollister Fire Department. Approximately 450 persons are trained each year on Medical Self-Help practices. To date, this prescribed training has been provided 1856 persons.

San Benito County Disaster Corps. Approximately two years ago, action was taken to recruit public spirited citizens in a trained cadre of personnel, to be identified as the San Benito County Disaster Corps. Three divisions were formed to provide communications, rescue and medical self-help (first aid) services in the event of local emergency and/or disaster. On call rosters are maintained to indicate business and home telephone numbers, addresses, disaster assignment and radio call signs if applicable. In addition, 8 licensed pilots have volunteered their services and aircraft in the event of need, as well as 4 boat owners, who have offered their equipment and services. This cadre of personnel would supplement the public safety agencies in this County.

Hospitals. The major hospital facility available is the Hazel Hawkins Hospital which has a total of 115 beds. There are two convalescent homes in the city, but since they are fairly well filled at all times, they offer little possibility for use in a disaster.

In 1968 the United States Government gave the County a 200-bed disaster hospital which is stored in sealed containers at Bolado Park. Every facility needed for hospital treatment is included such as beds, operating room and equipment, linen, medicines and the like.

Since any disaster would be far heavier in effect in the City of Hollister than in any other part of the county, the plan would be to set up the 200 bed hospital in the Parish Hall of Sacred Heart Church. If this should prove unworkable because of the destruction of the building a second choice is the Veteran's Memorial Building. If that should not be feasible then it would be set up at Bolado Park. (See map facing page 3)

However it is thought more reasonable to have the hospital close to the victims rather than to carry the victims out to the park.

One deficiency in this plan is the fact that there is no way in which local personnel can practice setting up the hospital equipment. It is all in hermetically sealed containers and these cannot be opened unless there is an actual disaster. Detailed instructions, together with photographs and diagrams, are contained in manuals which accompany the equipment but this is not a good substitute for actual practice.

A training facility for all law enforcement personnel in the County was constructed approximately two miles north of Hollister on State Route 25 (Bolsa Road) in 1971. Fifty percent of construction cost at the facility was funded by the California Council on Criminal Justice. The County funded the balance of construction cost. Individual and joint unit training is conducted at the site, involving marksmanship, baton, gas and riot/disorder training.

The problem of keeping an adequate supply of drugs on hand because of their rate of deterioration has been solved by a cooperative effort between the Federal Government, which furnishes the drugs, and the Hazel Hawkins Hospital. The Government furnishes a 30-day supply of drugs to the hospital, which uses them in the normal operation of its business. Thus, every thirty days the drug supply is replenished assuring that fresh ones will be on hand in case of a disaster.

Other Services. The County Road Commissioner is in charge of the section on engineering services. He is prepared to repair and restore highways and bridges, water supply, sewage disposal and handle the clearance of debris.

If additional help should be needed over and above the persons who have been trained, the State Department of Human Resources, working in cooperation with the County Clerk's office, will respond to this need. The Human Resources Department furnishes information as to what persons might be available, and the County Clerk handles the recruiting and the compilation of a card file showing what skills a particular individual has.

Search and rescue functions are carried out by a group of private aircraft owners and some who have boats which are suitable for this purpose. Although the need for this is infrequent, two bodies of persons who were drowned in the Hernandez Reservoir in 1971 were recovered by the rescue group.

Emergency Shelters. Radiological and nuclear defense is the responsibility of a science teacher at San Benito High School. There are five government licensed shelters from nuclear attack in the county.

1. The New Idria Mines are licensed for 20,000 people. However they are only stocked with supplies for 45 people.

2. The basement of the San Benito High School is licensed for 225 and is stocked for 225.

3. The basement of the San Benito County Jail is licensed for 90 and stocked for that number.

4. The basement in a building at the Keystone Seed Company is licensed for 60 and is stocked for 60.

5. A basement at Ideal Cement Company is licensed for 54 and stocked for 54.

Evacuation Plans. The policy of having mapped evacuation routes has been abandoned by the Federal Government. This has been done in the belief that the panic and confusion which results from evacuation attempts is probably a greater hazard than the danger from the disaster itself. Because of this federal rule the county has no designated evacuation routes.

Water Supply. The county being almost wholly agricultural has many wells, and several reservoirs which can furnish ample supplies of potable water for any emergency.

Building Fire Safety. Safety from fire in public buildings almost all of which are of frame construction has been a source of concern to those associated with county disaster problems. The owners of such buildings have been urged to take steps to make them safer, and in many instances this has been accomplished.

For example, the Hazel Hawkins Hospital has been completely sprinklered. Other buildings have had emergency exits installed, doors widened and similar remedial steps have been taken. For a number of years the county has operated under the provisions of the Uniform Building, Plumbing and Electrical Codes so that newer buildings have the required safety devices. There is a long term program to require buildings which were not built under the Codes to be brought up to those regulations.

Forest Fires. Forested land, as usually thought of, is practically nonexistent in San Benito County. There are scattered groves of oak trees and the usual tree cover which is found adjacent to stream beds.

Most of the outlying areas are either barren or covered with brush which poses the only threat of fire. Dwelling houses are widely scattered and unlikely to be damaged by burning brush.

The responsibility for fighting fires outside the incorporated cities is with the California State Division of Forestry. It maintains an office on Park Hill in Hollister.

Also, based at the Hollister Airport, are tanker aircraft which are used to dump fire suppressant chemicals on forest and brush fires.

The Division, being a state-wide agency, can transfer men, equipment and aircraft to those areas where they are most needed.

Brush fires, as contrasted with forest fires, are generally relatively simple to bring under control with the equipment available to the Division of Forestry at its Hollister headquarters.

Conclusion. From the foregoing it can be concluded that public safety in San Benito County with respect to any major disaster has been prepared for to the fullest extent possible. Safety activities are an ongoing, continuous project which is reviewed and updated at two year intervals.

Continuous training is a requirement for all professionals and volunteers under the direction of a salaried county employee who devotes the amount of time required to the activities as a part of his regular duties.

There is continuous coordination with the Region 2 office and in turn with the State Office of Emergency Services.

